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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

BY H. T. NEWCOMB.

It is naturally a memorable moment in the history of a reformed statistician when he is permitted to call to order a gathering composed of the leading active workers in the fields from which he has departed in order to lead a different life. I therefore thank you for the honor conferred in permitting me to preside on this notable occasion.

The purposes of the American Statistical Association, as I understand them, are to encourage the use and perfect the processes of a scientific method of study that is, perhaps, especially applicable, and certainly has been most extensively used in connection with the social sciences. These purposes are eminently practical, and it is an eminently practical incident of their execution that there should be frequent meetings of the Association in the city of Washington. For Washington is the scene of a greater amount of statistical activity than any other city in the world, and holds a very large number of the ablest and most experienced workers in statistics.

Both the American Statistical Association and these workers have much to gain by the comparison of methods and ideals for which such meetings as this afford opportunity. Every statistical worker ought to look upon a membership in the Association as both an honor and an opportunity, — an honor on account of its history and associations, an opportunity on account of its potential service to him and the services which he can render through the Association to his coworkers in statistics.

The Association was organized in 1839, the year which saw the beginning of the series of publications of the Royal Statistical Society. From the beginning its list of members has included many of the most honored names among American students of social conditions, and for a long time its member-

ship has been actually international. Its publications are now sent regularly to members in substantially every State of the Union and in most of the civilized nations of the world. These publications, issued continuously during a period of twenty-two years, cover a wide range of inquiry, and are valuable and practical contributions to our knowledge of social conditions.

This occasion cannot be allowed to pass without a pause of affectionate respect for two of the distinguished Presidents of the Association, both of whom earnestly wished to see the Association strong and active in Washington. Some ten or twelve years ago, when the first meeting in this city was held, General Francis A. Walker came here especially to aid and encourage our undertaking, and Colonel Carroll D. Wright was, of course, the leader, without whose support we would not have ventured to proceed. Each of these great men served long in turn as President of the Association, and each was for many years the unquestioned leader of statistical work at the nation's capital.

Francis A. Walker, soldier, scholar, statesman, and statistician, so far outranks his predecessors in the field of statistics as to seem its first really great figure. He planned and executed the first satisfactorily comprehensive decennial census and first gave a really scientific character to national statistical activity. He was the ideal American citizen, and the wide range of his services and achievements has scarcely a parallel.

In Carroll D. Wright, General Walker had a worthy successor. Colonel Wright had been a capable soldier, a wise and efficient legislator, before his exceptional service at the head of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor made his selection as the first Federal Commissioner of Labor so plain a duty that an out-going Republican President and his Democratic successor agreed that no other name ought to be considered. It would be superfluous to speak on this occasion of the immensity of his contribution to statistics, for I am but the least in this gathering in capacity to estimate its value. He was an unfailing inspiration to those of us who worked in statistics in Washington during his service here. His door was

always open to those who sought counsel concerning their work, he made their problems his own, his suggestions were generous and helpful, his good-nature was unfailing. To have enjoyed such an association and to have shared some of the hours not given to labor, when his genial nature, his breadth and warmth of sympathy, and his keen and kindly humor brought into view another phase of his manly and exalted character, I shall always regard as among the highest of privileges.

But we turn from the past, characterized by great men and brilliant achievements, to a present full of promise. The direction of great statistical undertakings is full of exhausting labor, and requires the strength and initiative of young men. The great men of whom I have spoken came to their own while very young as compared with men called to equal responsibilities and prominence in other fields. Other young men have been called to fill the places which they filled, and have taken up their labors with equal devotion to duty, with purposes equally noble, and, we believe, with equal promise of successful achievement. Their labors are so linked to a great past that they cannot choose but to strive greatly. It will be our pleasure to listen this evening to statements of the plans and purposes of some of the best qualified among them.